Message from the President

Philip Candids, MD

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

There are some days, even more than others, when one is proud to be part of the profession. Last month, the American Psychiatric Association responded to public reports that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was using detained children’s therapy notes against them in deportation hearings. According to the Washington Post (Hannah Dreier, February 15), ICE’s Office of Refugee Resettlement was forwarding treatment notes of unaccompanied minors obtained during treatment. Witnessing past crimes, childhood gang affiliation, and other self-disclosures were finding their way into deportation hearings. The problems of trust, consent, confidentiality, power, and law were evident throughout the community as APA members contacted their representatives and their professional organization to object.

On February 18, APA published a news release condemning the practice, and promulgated it on Capitol Hill. On February 25, alongside the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), APA wrote to Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar and Department of Homelated Security Acting Secretary Wolf asking to meet and offering an opinion of the APA Ethics Committee. The letter was signed by NAMI’s CEO, and by WPS member and APA CEO Saul Levin, MD. Members of the APA Council of Psychiatrists and the Law, led by their child forensic colleagues, had been following the news and proposing statements for the APA’s use. Pamela McPherson, MD, a leading psychiatrist who had worked in detention and advocated for migrant families and unaccompanied minors was among those underscoring the problems of consent among traumatized children, the need for disclosure of any limits to confidentiality, and the practice of minimizing clinical information that could be divulged even when someone’s safety was at risk. During that week’s hearings by the House and Senate Appropriations Committee, Senators Patrick Murray and Richard Durbin, and Representative Rosa DeLauro and Katherine Clark underscored issues raised by our psychiatry colleagues. Whether and how children can give informed consent and whether they were provided legal representation were cardinal elements of the questioning. Secretary Azar provided support for the process of informed consent and confirmed the presence of legal counsel (although not for every interaction). He characterized the transmission of clinical notes as a mistake, saying “That should not have happened.” He was clear that “we’ve corrected the understanding [of past regulation] of providers.” Clinical information that finds its way into serious incident reports (like those about harm to self or others) must be “minimal information,” he said, “respecting that psychiatrist or mental health professional relationship.”

The success of the APA’s Department of Government Regulations in placing this issue before Congress cannot be understated. Coordinating community responses, collaborating with other professional organizations, gathering data and commentary are all parts of their advocacy. Facilitating communication between issues.

March Course of the Month - Highs and Lows: Clinical Pearls and Lessons Learned in the Outpatient Management of Geriatric Bipolar Disorder

This course reviews guidelines for the treatment of aging patients with bipolar disorder. It will cover several challenging and complicated cases of geriatric bipolar disorder treated in an interdisciplinary outpatient clinic. Among other topics, it will explore the management of traditional mood stabilizers and associated symptoms of subtle toxicity in the context of medical co-morbidity and aging.

http://apapsych.org/mbr-mar20

Featured Course for Members: A Comprehensive Framework for the Office Evaluation of Neuropsychiatric Disorders

A thorough assessment of neurocognitive disorders requires in-depth knowledge of not only psychiatry but also several aspects of geriatric medicine, neurology, neuromaging and even medical ethics. During this
course, participants will learn a practical six-step approach for the efficient evaluation of patients with cognitive complaints in the office, illustrated by real cases.

http://apapsy.ch/framework_ncd

What is the APA Doing for You at State and National Levels?

- Learn about APA’s advocacy activities in Washington, D.C., and in state capitols to shape policies that advance psychiatry and promote the highest quality of care.
  https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/advocacy/february-2020-advocacy-update

Buprenorphine Prescriber Training

APA offers free and premium training for medication-assisted treatment (MAT) that meet the requirements of the Drug Addiction Treatment Act of 2000. Completion will allow qualified physicians to apply for a waiver to their Drug Enforcement Administration license, and thus to provide office-based treatment of opioid use disorder with buprenorphine. View book-based, online, and in-person training activities, as well as free CME-accredited webinars on MAT offered through APA and our partner organizations, at psychiatry.org/mat.

Call for Applications to Join the 2020-2021 Editorial Board

The American Journal of Psychiatry-Residents’ Journal is now accepting applications from APA Resident-Fellow Members to join the 2020-2021 Editorial Board. Learn more and apply by March 15, 2020.

Hey Alexa! Play My Psychiatric News Brief!


Free Risk Management Courses from APA, Inc.

American Professional Agency, Inc., APA’s endorsed medical liability carrier, offers almost a dozen risk management courses with AMA PRA Category Credit™, which are available free to members at www.psychiatry.org/risk.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

On Tuesday, April 14, 2020, MedStar Washington Hospital Center will present a Seminar/Webinar on Becoming a Climate Informed Therapist for Psychiatrists, Psychologists and Social Workers. The seminar will have speakers from the Climate Psychiatry Alliance presenting and possibly others. This seminar will be held from 3 to 5 PM, you can attend in person or see it on the web. Both the conference room location and the website address will be announced soon. CME credit will be available for all specialties listed. More information can be obtained by calling Stephen Peterson, MD at 202-420-9758.